



In the Kitchen

With Barb Agee ~ October 2014

Pear-fection

Juicy, soft, sweet pears are a favorite fruit in the Pacific Northwest where most of the supply for the US is grown. There are over 3000 varieties worldwide but here in our local markets one can find green or red Anjous, yellow or red Bartlett, Bosc, Comice, Concorde, Seckel and Starkrimson varieties. Each has a distinctive character, texture and flavor.

Pear and Parsnip Bisque

4 tablespoons butter	½ cup water
1 bunch scallions, sliced diagonally	2 Comice pears, chopped
4 cups peeled, cored and cubed parsnips	1 cup heavy cream
½ cup white wine, such as Semillon	½ teaspoon nutmeg
3 cups chicken broth	Salt and pepper to taste

In a large stock pot, melt butter. Add white part of scallions, and parsnips; sauté for 8 minutes over medium heat. Add wine, broth and water; bring to a simmer. Reduce heat to low and cook 8 minutes. Add pears and cook 10 minutes or until pears are soft. Place parsnip mixture in a blender and puree until smooth. Return mixture to stock pot; stir in cream. Add nutmeg; season with salt and pepper and top with scallion greens. *Serves 6*

Pear Salad with Buttermilk-Curry Dressing

Buttermilk-Curry Dressing (<i>see recipe below</i>)	½ cup thinly slice celery
½ cup dried apricots or dried sweet cherries, chopped	1 large Bartlett pear, cored and cubed
½ cup walnuts, toasted and chopped	3 teaspoons fresh tarragon, chopped and divided
½ cup shallots, finely chopped	2 heads Endive, leaves separated

In a large bowl gently toss apricots, walnuts, shallots, celery, pear and 1 teaspoon tarragon. Add enough dressing to moisten the salad ingredients. Fill each endive leaf with salad mixture and place on a serving platter. Sprinkle remaining tarragon over salad. Pour remaining dressing in a small serving pitcher to pass with salad. *Serves 8*

Buttermilk-Curry Dressing

3 tablespoons mayonnaise	¼ teaspoon onion powder
2 tablespoons buttermilk	¼ teaspoon kosher salt
¼ teaspoon curry or more to taste	¼ teaspoon fresh ground pepper

Whisk all ingredients in a bowl and set aside.

Pear & Cranberry Crostata

Pastry

1 cup + 2 tablespoons flour
2 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon powdered sugar
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cream cheese, chilled
2 tablespoons + 2 teaspoons vegetable shortening, chilled
3 tablespoons cold water
1 egg yolk, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon granulated sugar

Filling

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup sweetened dried cranberries
3 tablespoons orange juice or orange liqueur
3 Bartlett pears (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ pounds)
3 tablespoons granulated sugar
1 tablespoon cornstarch
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon

In a food processor pulse flour, sugars and salt together. Add cream cheese, shortening; pulse 3 or 4 times until coarse crumbs form. Sprinkle water over dough; pulse 3 to 4 times until dough just holds together. Shape dough into a 6-inch disk. Wrap well; refrigerate 30 minutes.

In a small microwave-safe bowl, combine cranberries and orange juice. Microwave for 30 seconds. Halve and core pears; cut into thin slices. In a large bowl, combine sugar, cornstarch and cinnamon; add pears and coat. Stir in cranberries and any liquid. Toss to coat evenly.

Preheat oven to 400°F. On a lightly floured surface, roll pastry into a 13-inch circle. Transfer pastry to a large ungreased baking sheet. Mound pear filling into center of pastry, leaving a 2-inch border. Fold border up partway over filling. Brush pastry edge with egg; sprinkle with 1 tablespoon sugar. Bake at 400°F for 40 minutes. *Serves 8*

Pear and Pecan Stuffed Squash

2 Delicata squash	$\frac{2}{3}$ cup Parmesan cheese, shredded and divided
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided	$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pecans, roughly chopped
Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper	$\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon dried thyme, or 2 teaspoons fresh thyme, chopped
$1\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked wheat berries	4 garlic cloves, chopped
1 large Bartlett pear, cored and diced	8 cups kale, coarsely chopped
	1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

Heat oven to 400°F. Halve Delicata squash lengthwise and seed then brush squash halves with 2 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle cavities with $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt. Place cut side down on a baking sheet. Roast for 25 minutes; cool slightly. Combine wheat berries, pear, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup Parmesan, pecans, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper. Fill the squash halves with mixture. Sprinkle with remaining $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cheese. Return to oven for 10 minutes. Then place under broiler for 1 to 2 minutes until cheese is melted and lightly browned.

Meanwhile, in a sauté pan heat 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Stir in garlic; cook 1 minute. Add kale and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water. Bring to a boil and reduce heat. Cover and cook for 3 minutes. Add lemon juice and salt and pepper to taste. Serve kale with baked squash. *Serves 4*

